

15 MARCH 1975

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**PROTECTIVE
CUSTODY**

Recently the National Conference of Editorial Writers passed a resolution urging publishing syndicates to adopt conflict-of-interest guidelines for journalists, having raised conflict-of-interest charges against columnists William F. Buckley, Jr. and Tom Braden.

Charges against Buckley—recently revealed to be a member of the Council on Foreign Relations—stem from his writings in which he found no fault with Laurance Rockefeller's \$60,000 payment in 1970 for publication by Arlington House of a smear biography of Arthur Goldberg, Nelson Rockefeller's gubernatorial opponent that year. Arlington House is owned by the Starr Broadcasting Group. Moreover, Buckley plugs the books sold by Arlington House in his newspaper columns, as well as in his *National Review* magazine.

Buckley in his column wrote: "Who should publish it (the Goldberg book)? . . . (The Rockefeller's) lawyer approached Arlington House and asked the editor (he happens to be a good friend of mine) whether he could bring out 100,000 copies of the Goldberg book by Lasky. The editor knew Lasky . . . and after discussing price, said yes. Anything wrong so far? Obviously not."

What is not so obvious is that Buckley is the chairman of the Starr Broadcasting Group, which owns Arlington House.

Read Kingsbury, NCEW member and editorial page editor of the Rochester (N.Y.) *Times-Union*, questioned Buckley's conflict of interest in a letter written to him October 23. "This failure seems to be a serious transgression of a rule that journalists should follow—the rule that a writer must disclose any financial or special interest in a subject he is discussing so that the reader may better evaluate his comments."

Kingsbury continued, "Your general position on most matters is well understood by the readers who see your column on the editorial page of the *Times-Union*, I feel sure. Many of them no doubt would feel that your view of the Goldberg book incident would be the same whether you had a special interest in the publishing house or not. But I am sure they would all feel it would have been more fair of you to disclose that interest to them than to ignore it."

Charges against Tom Braden stem from a recent column praising the generosity of Nelson Rockefeller but not disclosing Rockefeller's \$100,000 "loan" to Braden in 1954 to purchase a California newspaper.

Speaking in behalf of the NCEW, president Kenneth Rystrom wrote Braden "Your private business in your own. But, when you begin writing a public column defending a public figure who has been accused of being over-generous with his money, it seems to me that you owe it to your subscribing editors and readers to inform them that you have been among those who have benefited from that person's money. If you had preferred not to reveal your business dealings with him, you could have written on some other subject that day."

Rystrom is managing editor of the Vancouver (Washington) *Columbian*. He recently cancelled Braden's column.

Incidentally, 14 newspapers dropped the Buckley column in 1971 when his *National Review* published fictitious Vietnam War secrets. Among the papers were the *Denver Post*, the *Houston Chronicle*, the Kingsport (Tenn.) *Times News*, the *Record* of Hackensack (N.J.) and the nine papers of the Westchester-Rockland chain North of New York City.

Many of the leading newspapers of the country carried the fake "Secret Pentagon Papers" on page 1, becoming victims of a breach of faith, which is a cardinal sin in newspaperdom. The news services had also carried excerpts of the bogus story, with untold damage to the credibility of the press. About a week after the fake story had been published nation-wide, Buckley arrogantly announced that the whole thing was a hoax. Buckley is now anathema to many editors and publishers, due to his hoax story.

Publishers have a very strict rule against conflict-of-interest on the part of their reporters and there is a rigid rule that reporters accredited to the Congressional and White House press galleries may not use their news stories to plug anything or anyone in return for personal financial benefit. And occasionally a reporter is kicked out of the Congressional and White House press galleries for conflict-of-interest.

Interestingly enough, both Buckley and Braden are "ex"-CIA agents. Since CIA money is known to float freely among many journalists in Washington and New York and both Buckley and Braden are known to be under the protection of Nelson Rockefeller, it is doubtful that any action will be taken against either.

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